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ABSTRACT

Undertaken to determine if the pattern of use of library reserve collections found at other college libraries continues to exist at DePauw, this study found that approximately 40 percent of all the reserve collection items never circulated during the entire semester, and that 33 percent of the collection circulated only one to five times during that period. It is suggested that librarians examine their reserve collections to reduce the amount of time and effort expended on them, and to prevent them from discouraging more extensive use of the library. Statistical tables and references are provided. (FM)

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USE OF THE LIBRARY RESERVE COLLECTION

AT DEPAUW UNIVERSITY

by

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USE OF THE LIBRARY RESERVE COLLECTION

AT DEPAUW UNIVERSITY

Introduction

> An excursion through the library literature in search of material relating to reserve collections--their management and use--reveals that their very existence poses today as yesterday a very real problem. An enormous amount of time, expense and effort is required to maintain a reserve collection in proper working order.[1]
>
> The reserve shelf, instead of facilitating use of books, was often, in actual practice, a barrier to their effective employment.[2]

The reserve collection has had a long history in modern academic libraries. In fact, it may have been originated by none other than Melvil Dewey.[3] However, the reserve collection seldom has been acclaimed a total success. In 1940, Harvie Branscomb in his landmark work, Teaching With Books, wrote, "The unsatisfactoriness of the reserved book arrangement in most colleges is agreed to by students, librarians, and instructors alike."[4]

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[1]Lois Carrier, "Are University Reserve Collections Justified?" APLA Bulletin, 30 (December, 1971), p. 85.

[2]Henry Wriston, Academic Procession (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 133.

[3]John Berry, "The Unreserved Book," Library Journal, 90 (May 15, 1965) p. 2228.

[4]Harvie Branscomb, Teaching With Books (Chicago: American Library Association, 1940), p. 118.

Twenty-seven years later, writing in 1967, the noted librarian Robert Downs expressed a similar view. "Students, librarians, and many faculty are in agreement that the reserve book plan is unsatisfactory," he observed.[5]

Why then is the reserve book system continuing to exist? It is really nothing more than an effort to insure equal access by library users to the same content. Often this effort is of unquestionable educational and economic value. A book or a journal article may be of such value that everyone in a particular class should read it, but it may not be so important that everyone purchase his or her own copy.

However, the reserve collection may serve only as a "composite textbook," as Frederick Hicks called it as early as 1915,[6] with all the limitations of a textbook. Used in this manner the reserve collection may discourage students from making full use of the wealth of ideas and information found in the rest of the library. Also, a more readily apparent problem occurs when a large number of items is indiscriminately placed in the reserve collection. Not only are the logistics involved in physically moving the items and maintaining a good bibliographic record a serious drain on the time and energy of the library staff, a good number of the items will go unused. It is doubtful as to whether they should ever have been removed from the library's other collections.

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[5]Robert B. Downs, Resources of Canadian Academic and Research Libraries (Ottawa, Ontario: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 1967), p. 84.

[6]Frederick C. Hicks, "Library Problems Resulting from Recent Developments in American Universities," Library Journal, XI (May, 1915), p. 309.

[7]Benjamin Franklin Smith, "The Book Reserve System," Improving College and University Teaching, XII (Spring, 1964), pp. 83-86.

Statement of the Problem

It is the nature of libraries that items are acquired for their collections so a number of individuals can make use of them without each individual purchasing his or her own copy. Whenever heavy demand occurs or is anticipated to occur for a particular item, the traditional library response is to either acquire additional copies of the item or to restrict access to the item, such as by placing it in the reserve collection.

However, as already noted, a considerable number of items in the reserve collection go unused. Also, the reserve collection appears to be equally popular at the large university with large classes as at the small liberal arts college with traditionally small classes with fewer students seeking to use the same items. Writing in 1940, Felix Hirsh expressed the opinion, "Extensive use of reserved books may be a necessity in large institutions, but is certainly out of place in a small college which stresses individual instruction."[8] Later, Patricia Knapp concluded from her major study in the 1950's at Knox College, a small liberal arts college in Galesburn, Illinois, that:

> Perhaps the heyday of the reserve collection is over. Perhaps college instructors, in general, are returning to textbooks, source-books, and books of reading, and are also taking advantage of the newly-available paper-bound reprints.[9]

It is the purpose of this study to determine if the patter of use (or nonuse) of the reserve collection found at other institutions continues to exists at a small midwestern liberal arts college.

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[8]Felix E. Hirsch, "The Use of the Book Collection in the Teaching Program of a Progressive College," College & Research Libraries, 2 (December, 1940), p. 52.

[9]Patricia B. Knapp, College Teaching and the College Library (Chicago: American Library Association, 1959), p. 19.

Related Research

There have been a number of studies dating from the 1930's investigating the use of reserve collections in academic libraries. Generally, these early studies examined either the average use per student of the reserve collection or the percentage of the reserve collection not used. Lois Carrier summarized in her article the findings of a number of earlier studies, and the results are displayed by Table One. Table Two displays the results of the studies examining the percentage of the reserve collection not being circulated during a given period of time. These two tables reveal considerable differences in the use of the reserve collection. From table one it would appear that Knapp was correct in concluding that use of the reserve collection was decreasing (at least to the early 1960's) from the 1930's. Table two indicates that between 16.1% and 53.8% of the reserve collection never circulated in the various studies. However, no trend is evident.

Methodology

For this study, the records of the 878 items placed in the reserve collection of the Roy O. West Library of DePauw University were examined for the second semester of the 1975-76 academic year. DePauw University is a private liberal arts college of approximately 2,300 students and located in Greencastle, Indiana. The Roy O. West Library is the main campus library for the University. The two small branch libraries were not included in the study. A manual record was maintained of the circulation of reserve items throughout the semester.

TABLE ONE

[a]Use of the Reserve Collection Per Student

In Selected Studies

Investigator	Year	School	Number of Students	Time Period	Average Number of Items Used Per Student For Period	Average Number of Items Used Per Student Per Year
[b]Eurich	1930	University of Minnesota	8,362	One Year	34.5	34.5
[c]McDiamid	1932-33	Seven Colleges	2,278	One Semester	12.38	24.76
[d]Branscomb	1936-37	One University	2,292	One-Half Semester	12.94	51.76
[e]H.L. Johnson	1937-38	Four Colleges	1,763	One Year	26.19	26.19
[f]Knapp	1954	Knox College	738	One Quarter	5.61	16.83
[g]Ritter	1962-63	117 Small Liberal Arts Colleges		One Year	15.9	15.9

[a]Table adapted from Carrier, "Are University Reserve Collections Justified."

[b]A. C. Eurich, "Student Use of the Library," Library Quarterly, III (January, 1933), pp. 87-94.

[c]E.W. McDiarmid, Jr., "Conditions Affecting the Use of the College Library," Library Quarterly, V (1935), pp. 70.

[d]Branscomb, Teaching With Books, p. 27.

TABLE ONE (Continued)

[e]H.L. Johnson, "A Study of the Use of Five College Libraries" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Iowa, 1938).

[f]Knapp, College Teaching and the College Library, p. 19.

[g]R.V. Ritter, "Recorded Library Use in Small Four-year Colleges, 1962-63," College & Research Libraries, 25 (September, 1964), pp. 391-392.

TABLE TWO

Percentage of Reserve Collection Items

Unused in Selected Studies

Investigator	School	Year	Time Period	Number of Items	Percentage of Items Not Used	
	[a]Princeton	1933-34	One Semester	4,224 Vols.	16.1%	
[a]Miller	Nebraska	1934-35	One Semester	6,181 Vols.	32.0%	
[a]Coney	Texas	1936-37	One Year	7,060 Vols.	30.2%	
[b]Davidson	Knox	1938	One Year	-----	16.0%	
	[c]Idaho	1960-61	One Year	1,862 Titles	18.4%	
[d]Thurton	Oberlin	1962	One Semester	6,000 Vols.	20.0%	
[e]Carrier	St. Mary's University	1964-65	One Year	191 Titles	84.3%	Not Justified to be on Reserve
[f]Carmack & Loeber	Nebraska	1968-69	One Semester	3,600 Titles	40.0%	
[g]Gibson	Midwestern University	1969-70	Twelve-week Period	Sample of 117 Titles	53.8%	
[h]Thompson	Massey	1970	One Year	----	17.0%	

TABLE TWO (Continued)

Investigator	School	Year	Time Period	Number of Items	Percentage of Items Not Used
[i]Ormondroyd	Cornell	1974	One Semester	2,768 Books	29.7%
[j]Gistitin	Capricornia	1976	One Semester	771 Items	17.5%

[a]Theordore W. Koch, "A Symposium on the Reserve Book System," College and University Library Service, ed. A.F. Kuhlman (Chicago: American Library Association, 1938), pp. 73-106.

[b]Carter Davidson, "Book Selection in a Liberal Arts College," The Practice of Book Selection, ed. L. R. Wilson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), pp. 243-244.

[c]"Use of Books on Reserve Shelves," Bookmark (Idaho), 14 (December, 1961), pp. 58-59.

[d]Eileen Thorton, "Rsearch in a College Library," Reader in the Academic Library, ed. Michael Reynolds (Washington, D.C.: NCR Microcard Editions, 1970), pp. 241-250.

[e]Carrier, "Are University Collections Justified," pp. 100-101.

[f]Bob Carmack and Trudi Loeber, "The Library Reserve System--Another Look," College & Research Libraries, 32 (March, 1971), pp. 105-109.

[g]Mary Jane Gibson, "Letter to the Editor," College & Research Libraries, 32 (May, 1971), p. 228.

[h]Valerie Thompson, "Massey University Library Reserve Book Issues, 1970," Australian Academic and Research Libraries, 2 (December, 1971), pp. 172-175.

[i]Joan Ormondroyd, "The New Belligerence or Tightening the Belt at URIS Reserve," Cornell University Libraries Bulletin, 195 (May/June, 1975), pp. 10-12.

[j]Carol Gistitin, "The Reserve Collection," Australian Academic and Research Libraries, 8 (March, 1971), pp. 39-41.

Results and Discussion

The information displayed by Table Three indicates that reserve collection items circulate an average of 7.2 times for the entire semester. The average circulation for particular types of items ranged from 2.1 times for the government publications to 92.6 times for the few miscellaneous category items. Approximately forty percent of all the reserve collection items never circulated during the entire semester. Another thirty-three percent of the reserve collection circulated only one to five times during the semester. Based on these figures, it is questionable whether or not approximately seventy-three percent (641 items) of the collection should have been on reserve. The forty percent figure of unused items is surpassed only by the finding of one other study included in Table Two.

Also, it is evident that reliance on the reserve collection at DePauw University is much less than at the schools studied in the 1930's or for the schools included in studies by Knapp and Ritter. The approximately 2,300 DePauw University students used an average of only 2.76 reserve items for the semester, or the equivalent of only 5.5 reserve items for the entire year. These figures can be contrasted with the results of other studies displayed by Table Two.

Carmack and Loeber concluded from their study at the University of Nebraska there was a relationship between the number of titles on a reserve list for a course and the number of times that a title on that list circulated.[10]

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[10]Bob Carmack and Trudi Loeber, "The Reserve System--Another Look," College & Research Libraries, 32 (March, 1971), p. 107.

TABLE THREE

Use of DePauw University Reserve Collection

Second Semester, 1975-76

	Books	Periodicals	Government Publications	Miscellaneous Items	Total
Number of Items	698	142	33	5	878
Number of Circulations	4,160	1,660	70	463	6,353
Average Number of Circulations per Item	5.9	11.7	2.1	92.6	7.2

TABLE FOUR

Use of DePauw University Reserve Collection

Grouped by Number of Circulations

Second Semester- 1975-76

Number of Circulations	Books	Periodicals	Government Publications	Miscellenous Items	Total
0	310(44%)	69(20%)	12(26%)	0(0%)	351(40%)
1-5	237(34%)	36(25%)	16(48%)	1(20%)	290(33%)
6-20	97(14%)	46(32%)	5(15%)	2(40%)	150(17%)
21+	54(8%)	31(22%)	0(0%)	2(40%)	87(9%)
	698	142	33	5	878

However, Cohen found in his study that use of the reserve collection did not seem to have much to do with the length of course lists.[11] From observation of the results of this study, as displayed by Table Five, as more items are placed in the reserve collection for a particular course, the average circulation per item and the percentage of items used per course both decrease.

This observation can be tested statistically through use of the chi square non-parametric statistical test. Table Six consists of a contingency table comparing the actual observation with expected observations. With twelve degrees of freedom, the null hypothesis that no relationship exists between the number of items on reserve per course and the number of circulations per item is rejected at the .01 level. Although percentage figures are usually not included in contingency tables, they are included in this study to dramatize the relationship between the length of the reserve reading lists and the use of the collection. As more items are placed on reserve per course, the percentage of unused items tends to increase and the percentage of heavily used items tends to decrease.

A study by Peter Marshall may partially explain this pattern. Marshall found that "students made more extensive use of material assigned frequently in small amounts than when all of the material was assigned on only one occasion."[12] From this we might reasonable expect students to make more use a few items placed on reserve for a specific assignment than seven dozen items placed on reserve only for general enrichment.

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[11]John M. Cohen, "The Underutilization of Reserve Materials: A Report On One Library's Experience," LACUNY Journal, 5 (n.d.), pp. 21-25.

[12]Peter Marshall, "How Much, How Often?" College & Research Libraries, 45 (November, 1974), pp. 453-456.

TABLE FIVE

Use of DePauw University Reserve Collection

Grouped by Number of Items per Course

Second Semester, 1975-76

Number of Items Per Course	Number of Courses and Percent of Courses with Reserve Items	Average Circulation	Number and Percent Not Circulating	Total Number of Items and Percent of All Reserve Items	Total Circulation per Group and Percent of All Reserve Circulation
1-5	33 (45.2%)	13.7	18 (25.7%)	70 (8.0%)	961 (15.1%)
6-15	22 (30.1%)	9.3	81 (41.3%)	196 (22.3%)	1,825 (28.7%)
16-25	9 (12.3%)	9.4	70 (32.4%)	216 (24.6%)	2,021 (31.8%)
26+	9 (12.3%)	3.9	182 (46.0%)	396 (45.1%)	1,546 (24.3%)
	73 courses (53 instructors)	7.2	351 (40.0%)	878 (100%)	6,353 (100%)

TABLE SIX

Chi Square Contingency Table

Number of Reserve Items Per Course	Number of Circulations					Total
	0	1-5	6-10	11-20	21+	
1-5	18 *(27.98) **25.7%	18 (27.12) 25.7%	11 (6.7) 15.7%	10 (5.26) 14.3%	13 (6.93) 18.6%	70 100%
6-15	81 (78.36) 41.3%	56 (64.74) 28.6%	14 (18.75) 7.1%	20 (14.73) 10.2%	25 (19.42) 12.8%	196 100%
16-25	70 (86.35) 32.4%	73 (71.34) 33.8%	20 (20.67) 9.3%	21 (16.24) 9.7%	32 (21.40) 14.8%	216 100%
26+	182 (158.31) 40.0%	143 (130.80) 36.1%	39 (37.88) 9.8%	15 (29.77) 3.8%	17 (39.24) 4.3%	196 100%
Totals	351 40.0%	290 33.0%	84 9.6%	66 7.5%	87 9.9%	878 100%

$X^2 = \frac{(f-e)^2}{e} = 57.4$ 12 degrees of freedom $X^2 = 26.217$ at .01

The null hypothesis that no relationship exists between the number of items placed in the reserve collection per course and the number of circulations per item must be rejected.

*Expected observations are in parentheses

**Percent actual observations in cell is of total number of items in category of "Number of Reserve Items Per Course."

Conclusions and Recommendations

The pattern of use of the reserve collection for the period studied at DePauw University is similar to the pattern found in many other studies. A vast majority of the items placed in the reserve collection could not be justified being placed there on the basis of use. Although not investigated in this study, Carrier found in her study that placement of an item in the reserve collection actually may decrease its use.[13]

The results of this study point out the continued need for librarians to examine the library reserve collection to reduce the amount of time, energy, and effort expended on this collection and to prevent it from discouraging more extensive use of the library. A number of writers through the years have made numerous useful suggestions on how this can be done, and anyone responsible for a reserve collection is well-advised to review the literature.[14]

The cooperation of the faculty is important because it is they who generally request that materials be placed in the reserve collection. However, the burden for improving the reserve collection falls on the librarians since, as Marshall astutely points out, ". . .the cost of reserve systems is borne by the library."[15] The role of the librarian in improving the reserve collection cannot be a passive one. According to Marshall:

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[13]Carrier, "Are Reserve Collections Justified," p. 101.

[14]Most books on academic library administration and articles on reserve collections contain suggestions for improving the reserve collection. A number of useful ideas are included in the bibliography at the end of this report. Among the more useful is: Guy Lyle, Administration of the College Library (New York: H.W. Wilson Co., 1974). An older but still useful work which might otherwise be overlooked is: A. F. Kuhlman, "How Reserve Book Collections Can Be Made Effective," College and University Library Service, ed. A. F. Kuhlman (Chicago: American Library Assocation, 1938), pp. 102-105.

[15]Marshall, "How Much, How Often?" p. 453.

> It is not sufficient for librarians to simply forward the total, or even circulation figures of individual items, to the faculty at the end of each term. What must accompany the figures is a basis on which faculty can judge the effectiveness of the material they choose, and more important, how the material is brought to the attention of the students.[16]

Joan Ormondroyd has recommended a "new belligerence" on the part of librarians in working with the faculty to improve the operation of the reserve collection.[17] Librarians do need to take an active role in the educational process and to be assertive in working with the faculty to improve educationally productive use of all aspects of the library, including the reserve collection. Henry Wriston's long standing "war"[18] on the reserve collection is far from over, but with continued research and an unwillingness on the part of librarians to tolerate the abuses of the system, an acceptable truce to faculty, students, and librarians yet may be reached.

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[16]Marshall, "How Much, How Often?" p. 456.

[17]Joan Ormondroyd, "The New Belligerence or Tightening the Belt at URIS Reserve," Cornell University Libraries Bulletin, 195 (May/June, 1975), pp. 10-12.

[18]John Berry, "Henry Wriston's War," Library Journal, 100 (January 15, 1975), p. 79.

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